

Food Donation Mobile Apps –What Has Been Done and How It Can Be Improved
Jiva Capulong School of Informatics, Indiana University–Purdue University
Indianapolis

Food insecurity, a lack of access to healthy and affordable food, is a major issue within the US and many nonprofit organizations, like food banks and food pantries are unable to keep up with increased demand for food support. With smartphones progressively increasing their capability in their application to everyday life, how can they play a role in the supporting of people living with food insecurity? In this study, we reviewed multiple mobile applications available free on the iOS app store, including *Food Bank*, *AmpleHarvest*, *St. Mary's Food Bank*, *Roadrunner Food Bank*, and *Wood Buffalo Food Bank*, taking note of what features they possess, and how well they functioned. Our findings have shown that the most common features consisted of a map for locating food banks, and a contribution function for donating money and giving suggestions and information for donating food and volunteering. Further notable features found that were not as common include a resources page referring to other food support programs, a page for upcoming events, and social media integration. Notable issues included some apps being comparatively lacking in features, leading to gaps in opportunity. Furthermore, issues of long-term application and project sustainability were noticeable, where a lack of regular updates in some apps are suspected to be the cause of dated appearances, functions not loading, and crashes. It was important to note that the apps with more features and better functionality are more state specific, run by local organizations. This analysis suggests that the cost, production, and maintenance of free apps may be a productive area to explore. Overall, our initial research helps us understand the current landscape of donation technology among mobile applications. In further research, studies with core stakeholders, including donors and donation recipients, would help gain understanding and assessment in new donation methods and platforms.

Mentor: Lynn Susan Dombrowski Human-Centered Computing Department Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis